

**RECORD OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH
DR. MICHAEL SOLOWAY- PASSENGER
ON BOARD THE U.S. SMALL PASSENGER VESSEL
PORT IMPERIAL MANHATTAN
DATED AUGUST 6, 2001**

3 PAGES TOTAL (INCLUDING COVER)



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of Marine Safety

Record of Telephone Interview

Date: August 6, 2001

Person Interviewed: Dr. Michael Soloway- Passenger, *Port Imperial Manhattan*

Interview Conducted By: Robert B. Ford,
Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTRODUCTION

I conducted a telephone interview with Dr. Michael Soloway in conjunction with the NTSB investigation of the November 17, 2000 fire on board the U.S. Small Passenger vessel *Port Imperial Manhattan*. The text that follows is not a verbatim record of the conversation. It has been developed from my handwritten notes of the conversation and is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

INTERVIEW

Dr. Michael Soloway is a resident of Lincoln Harbor, New Jersey and was a frequent passenger on the ferry service between his residence and Manhattan. Dr. Soloway stated that he had a legal case pending against NY Waterways as a result of smoke and chemical inhalation and was reluctant to discuss the accident. Dr. Soloway denied medical treatment on the evening of the accident, but sought treatment two weeks later.

On the night of the accident, Dr. Soloway was standing on the upper deck with another passenger when they observed smoke coming from the ventilators. Both passengers went to the pilothouse and notified the captain. The captain observed the smoke and sent a deckhand to investigate the source of the smoke.

Dr. Soloway stated that the fire was handled poorly. The crew was disorganized and that nobody knew what to do. He stated that he had been on the vessel in the past when there had been approximately 150 passengers on board. He believed there would have been many fatalities if the passenger count had been greater on the night of the

accident.

The crew never told the passengers to don lifejackets. He stated that while the passengers were on the bow discussing the situation and whether they should have lifejackets, one passenger rushed into the smoke filled cabin to retrieve lifejackets and returned with adult and child size jackets.

The vessel was on fire, with no lights, drifting down the river and passing traffic did not make any attempt to assist the *Manhattan*. He stated that the passengers and crew should have been rescued within five minutes. At one point, another NY Waterway vessel came within fifty feet and did not come alongside to assist. He did not know when the vessel lost lighting in the main cabin and did not know if lifejackets were available on the upper deck.

Dr. Soloway believed that the crew should be trained in handling emergencies. He stated that a pre-departure safety brief was never provided and to date there has been no change in company procedures.

END OF INTERVIEW

Robert B. Ford